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HONKUM & HEAT

TRIP FACES HIS
GREATEST
THREAT--



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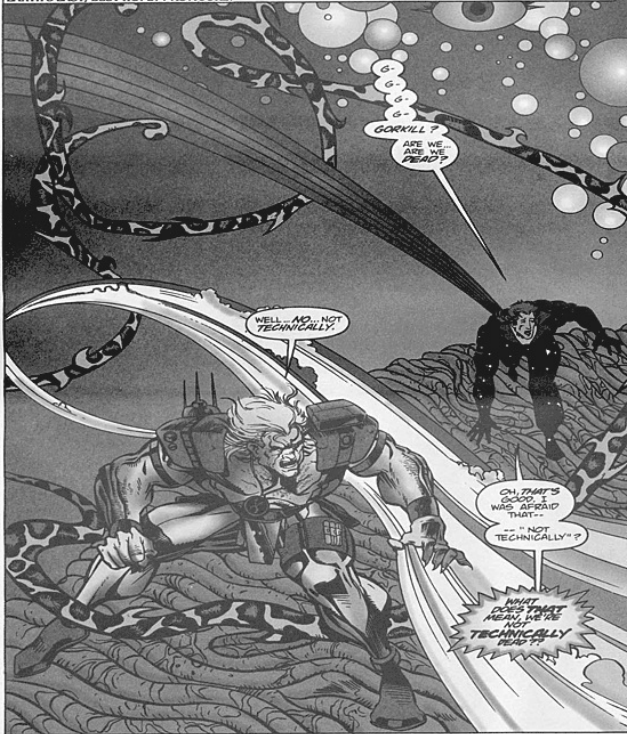
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IN A MIX OF MAGIC, COMEDY AND EXPLOSIVE SUSPENSE, FAILED STAND-UP COMIC TRIP MUNROE HAS BECOME THE LAST LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST A POWERFUL, EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL OVERLORD — IN OTHER WORDS, EARTH'S LAST, BEST HOPE... IS A JOKE.



G-
G-
G-
G-
GORKILL?

ARE WE...
ARE WE
READY?

WELL... NO... NOT
TECHNICALLY.

OH, THAT'S
GOOD. I
WAS AFRAID
THAT--

-- "NOT
TECHNICALLY"
--

WHAT
DOES THAT
MEAN, WE'RE
NOT
TECHNICALLY
READY?



COLLECTING ONESELF

BLOODSHED, PART 3 of 4

A TALE OF THE BARKERVERSE
CREATED BY CLIVE BARKER

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LISTEN TO
ME, TRIR

THIS IS THE
NEUROSPHERE. IT'S A
CYBERSPACE FORMED BY
THE UNUSED 9/10
OF OUR BRAINS. OUR
"HYPERMINDS."

BACK HOME ON THE
MEGAS, WE KNOW OF
IT AS WHERE YOU GO AS
YOU'RE DYING -- WHERE
YOUR LIFE "FLASHES IN
FRONT OF YOU."

DON'T KNOW. MAYBE
BECAUSE YOUR POWER TO
TRANSFORM THINGS CAME
FROM A GOD.

DEM-
GOD.

WHATEVER. MAYBE
IT OPENED UP PART OF
YOUR HYPERMIND.

--LIKE BEING IN A VEHICLE CRASH.
ALL YOUR SENSES GET SO ALERT, TWO
SECONDS CAN SEEM LIKE TEN
MINUTES.

AND MAYBE THIS
ISN'T EVEN YOUR
LIFE. FLASH.
MAYBE IT'S
MINE.

YEAH? WELL, IN THAT
CASE...

YEAH... I
REMEMBER NOW...
FELON BAILEY'S PERSONAL
CHAMPION BLOODSHED. SO, UM... HOW
CAME MY LIFE'S
NOT FLASHING?
TOSSING US INTO
THAT ELECTRICAL
GENERATOR.

...IS HE
OUT OF MY
BRAIN OR
YOURS?

OH, RIGHT. LIKE
WE CORPH WARRIORS
HAVE SOFT HANDS
LIKE THAT.

WELL--I'M
FOLLOWING
HIM.

WHY?

YOU SAID IT
YOURSELF--I'M
DYING...I'M
REALLY DYING.

AND I'M
JUST GOING
TO GO ALONG
AND GET IT
OVER, WITH.

YOU CAN'T
MEAN THAT!

YOU'RE GORKIN STRATH'S
CHAMPION TO DEFEND
EARTH FROM
FELON BALE!

YOU'RE SUPPOSED
TO FIGHT DEATH
EVERY STEP OF
THE WAY!

HEY!
COME BACK
HERE!

NO, I'VE HAD
ENOUGH. I'VE TRIED
I DID THE BEST
I COULD...

...AND FELON
BALE'S CHAMPION
BEAT ME.

WE ALL DESERVE
PEACE AT THE END,
GORKILL.

I'M TIRED, MAN.
I'VE HAD A MEAN AND
PAINFUL LIFE. YOU
JUST DON'T KNOW.

OH, GET
OFF YOUR
SELF-PITY.

YOU KNOW--UNTIL
HE DENOUNCED ME, I WAS
ONE OF FELON BALE'S
CORMI ELITE.

I'VE SEEN AND ENDURED
MORE PAIN ON THE
BATTLEFIELD THAN
YOU'LL EVER KNOW.

AND "EMOTIONAL WOUNDS" DON'T
COMPARE WITH YOUR *INSIDES*
GETTING BLOWN OUT AND HANGING BY
A THREAD OF MUSCLE TISSUE.

SOME PEOPLE WITH
EMOTIONAL WOUNDS BLOW
THEIR HEADS OFF, GORKILL.

WHY NOT JUST ACCEPT
THE INEVITABLE?





OH, MANNNNNNN...
I CAN'T EVEN *DIE*
RIGHT. WHAT KINDA
DEATH IS THIS?

IT'S *NOT* DEATH
YET! YOU CAN'T
GIVE UP!

OHAY-- SO MAYBE YOUR
HEART'S STOPPED BEATING,
BUT THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO
BE OXYGEN DEPRIVATION IN
YOUR BRAIN YET!

GEEZ, AND
YOU CALL ME
DEPRESSING?

YEAH-- AND YOU ALSO
LACK A SENSE OF *IRONY*.
DID YOU CATCH THAT FINGER-
SNAPP? DON'T YOU SEE?

OUR "FRIEND" HERE THAT YOU
WANT SO MUCH TO FOLLOW-- IT'S
OBVIOUSLY NOT A *PERSON*... IT'S
A MANIFESTATION OR SOMETHING!

SOMETHING LIKE...
OHMM, SAYYYY... YOUR
SURVIVAL INSTINCT?

SO EVEN MY *SUB-
CONSCIOUS* HAS A MIND OF
IT'S OWN OUT HERE? I DON'T
THINK I *LIKE* THAT.

'CAUSE Y'KNOW-- I
FIGURE WE HAVE A LOT MORE
CONTROL OVER *MEMORIES* THAN
WE DO OVER THOUGHTS OR FEARS
OR INSECURITIES.

WHAT'RE WE
GONNA DO WHEN WE
RUN INTO *THEM*?

AND HEY--
GORKILL.

IF THIS NEUROSHERE
IS FORMED BY ENERGY
FROM THE UNLUSED PARTS
OF OUR BRAINS, WELL...

...NO OFFENSE, BUT YOU'RE
AN ALIEN BEING, HOW COULD
YOU BE HERE... UNLESS...
UNLESS...

UNLESS
GORKI AND
HOMO SAPIENS
ARE RELATED?

WELL,
YOU KNOW
WHAT? THAT'S
INTERESTING...
BUT WHO
CARES?

ALL I WANTING TO
DO IS FIND THAT WHITE
LIGHT-- THEY TALK
ABOUT... AND DIVE
RIGHT INTO IT.

TRIP... FOR THE MOMENT
FORGET ABOUT THE FIVE
BILLION NATIVES IT'S
YOUR RESPONSIBILITY
TO PROTECT.

WHAT ABOUT
YOUR COMRADES
AND FAMILY?

MONA LISA'S
DYING, AND
MY MOTHER'S
ALREADY DEAD.

SO YOU'RE JUST
GOING TO LEAVE EARTH
AT THE MERCY OF A
BLOOD REAPER?

WHAT'S
A BLOOD
REAPER?

ONE OF FELON BALE'S
PERSONAL MISSIONARIES. THEY
KILL INFIDELS AND CHANNEL THEIR
LIFE-ENERGY INTO THE
SUNFLOWER.

YOU KNOW-- THAT
THING WHERE STARS
COME FROM.

OH, YEAH,
RIGHT-- THAT
THING.

SO YOU SAY THEY
SUCK OUT LIFE-ENERGY.
CAN THEY PUT IT
BACK IN?

LET ME PUT IT THIS
WAY-- HAVE YOU EVER TRIED
TO PUT TOOTHASTE BACK
IN THE TUBE?



ELSEWHERE... ON
A PLANET CALLED
THE NECBYS...

... A GODKIN NAMED
STRAITH OBSERVES
A GOD NAMED
FELON BALE.

SO WHO NEEDS
OMNISCIENCE
WHEN YOU'VE A
SPY NETWORK?

THAT'S THE THING
ABOUT BEING A DEMI-
GOD... YOU'VE GOT TO
TRY HARDER.

WELL... I SEE
FELON BALE IS STEPPING
UP HIS "HOLY CRUSADE'S"
PREPAREDNESS...

... READING HIS
ANALYZERS TO GO
GATHER BATTLEFIELD
DATA ON EARTH.

SO
PREDICTABLE.



HE'LL HAVE HIS CORDI
HANGAR ON EARTH PLACE
THE DIMENSIONAL DOORWAYS--
TRIP MUNROE'S TRAP CARDS--
IN UNPOPULATED AREAS.

STANDARD PROCEDURE
TO KEEP THE ARRIVING
ANALYZERS SAFE FROM
ATTACK BY A PLANET'S
AUTHORITIES...



...EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED
WHEN THAT FIRST ANALYZER
APPEARED IN POPULATION
CENTER DESIGNATE:
"NEW YORK CITY." "N

FINDING AND REACHING
SUITABLE, UNINHABITED
AREAS SHOULD TAKE HIS
CORDI A GOOD DEAL
OF TIME...

...ALL THE BETTER FOR MY--
AND I USED THE WORD LOOSELY--
"CHAMPION" TO BETTER LEARN THE
POWERS I DEFEATED HIM.

W H & H #2. --MARG

THOUGH OF COURSE,
TRIP MUNROE WON'T BE
LEARNING ANYTHING IF
BLOODSHED HAS TRULY
TERMINATED HIM.

EITHER WAY WORKS FOR
ME-- ALREADY BLOODSHED'S
EXISTENCE WORRIES THE
TEN THOUSAND GODS THAT
FELON DALE HAS GONE MAD.

FELON, FELON, FELON...
YOU'RE SUCH A FANATIC.
YOU ALWAYS WANT
ONE MORE PLANET FOR
YOUR ACCURSED RELIGION.

FINE AND GOOD!
THIS LATEST CRUSADE
WILL KEEP YOU
DISTRACTED.

AND IF ALL GOES
AS I'VE SET IN MOTION,
YOU SOON WON'T EVEN
HAVE A RELIGION...

...FOR GODKIN STRAITH
WILL ASCEND TO GODHOOD,
TAKING YOUR PLACE.

AND AS FOR MY
CHAMPION, I OFFER
THIS DEMI-GOD'S
BLESSING...

"...GOOD
LUCK."

"...GOING ON ABOUT
"WILL TO LIVE."

YEAH, WELL,
SOMETHING
TELLS ME...

C'MON! BE REALISTIC!
I'VE BEEN **ELECTROCUTED!**
WE'RE JUST MARKING TIME UNTIL
MY **BRAIN** SHUTS DOWN.

SURRRPRIIIISE!

"YOU'RE NOT
DEAD YET."







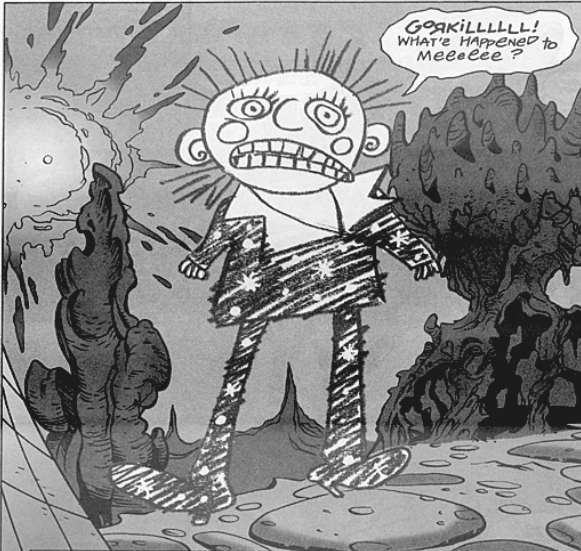
LET GO OF ME, YOU
FINGER FREAK! CAN'T
YOU SEE IT'S OVER?



NOW YOU TELL
ME, IF I'D
KNOWED THAT,
I'D HAVE GIVEN
UP A LONG
TIME A --
--OH, MAN...
I DON'T FEEL
SO GOOD.



TRIP?
TRIP?



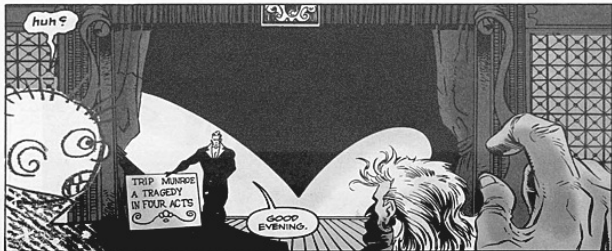
GORYKILLLLL!
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO
MEEEEE?



HMMMM. LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE RETREATED TO A
PERSONIFICATION OF YOUR CHILDHOOD SELF-IMAGE,
SEEMS TO ME.

BUT I
DON'T
WANNA
DO THIS
WAYYYY.

UM... I THINK YOU
SHOULD TURN AROUND.



I WENT TO A LOCAL COLLEGE--ALL I COULD AFFORD--AND IT WAS HIGH SCHOOL ALL OVER AGAIN--

...THOUGH I'M PROUD TO SAY I NEVER SAW AN EPISODE OF *STAR TREK* IN MY LIFE.

--WHERE GIRLS PREFERRED GUYS IN CONVOY HATS AND PICKUP TRUCKS OVER GUYS WHO READ BOOKS AND COMICS AND LIKED MARINE TRUCKS AND ROY CULTURE...

SURE--I *TOYED* WITH THE IDEA OF BECOMING LIKE EVERYONE ELSE...

...BUT SOMEHOW, I JUST DECIDED I WAS *BETTER* THAN THAT.



THEN ALMOST AS SOON AS I DISCOVERED THIS, MY MOTHER WAS BRUTALLY MURDERED.

AH, MY MOM. I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS TO KNOW AT LEAST ONE PERSON LOVED ME AS I WAS

I LIVED IN THE TRAILER WITH HER DURING COLLEGE, AFTER DAD AND SHE SPLIT UP. SHE ALWAYS MADE ME *DINNER*, NO MATTER WHAT.



THOUGH I WON'T TELL YOU--SHE WASN'T YOUR AVERAGE MOM.

SHE AND DAD WERE INTO MOTORCYCLES, TEQUILA, HEAVY METAL... AND HAVING... FRIENDS SPEND THE NIGHT IN THEIR ROOM.

I'D HEAR THEM SOMETIMES... PARTYING.



BUT SHE WAS MY MOM--AND I LOVED HER.

AND ONE DAY--SOMEBODY STRANGLED HER... SHE DIED HORRIBLY.

THE KILLER WAS NEVER FOUND. HE MURDERED MY MOM... AND GOT AWAY WITH IT.



AND NOW BLOODSHED TELLS ME--HE'S THE ONE WHO DID IT.



"I DROPPED OUT OF COLLEGE AFTER THIS, MOVED TO NEW YORK...

"...AND BECAME A BORDERLINE ALCOHOLIC.

"I WAS FOLLOWING IN MY FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS, EXCEPT, OF COURSE, I DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO BEAT UP.

"AND THEN, Y'KNOW, A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON MY WAY TO THE CLOUTIER...

I GOT HUNGRY.

I MADE A DEAL WITH THE CORNER BAR OWNER FOR ME TO INTRODUCE HIS DRINKING GIRLS IN EXCHANGE FOR A MEAL.

AND SEEING ALL THOSE SAD, EMPTY GUYS THERE...

I JUST HAD TO MAKE FUN OF THEM!

"AND THEY THOUGHT IT WAS FUNNY! AND IT FELT GREAT. GETTING ALL THIS BULL OUT ON STAGE!

"I THINK WE FALL INTO CAREERS. I STARTED WORKING THE COMEDY CLUBS--FOR FREE--AND OOD JOBS TO SUPPORT MYSELF.



SO MUCH SO THAT A MONTH AFTER WE GOT MARRIED, SHE RAN OFF WITH DEAR OL' DAD!

I GOT SOME DIVORCE PAPERS FROM TIAJUANIA. THEY WERE ADDRESSED TO "TRIPLE" MUNROE.

I HAD TO LAUGH.

AND THAT'S WHEN I DISCOVERED WHO I AM. SOME PEOPLE ARE DOCTORS, OTHERS ARE LAWYERS--

--ME? I'M A PROFESSIONAL SURVIVOR.



ACT FOUR:
A THEATER ON
THE *UPPER*
WEST SIDE.

thalia

MEAN STREETS

TAXI DRIVER

"MONA LISA McDONAGH
WAS A COMIC I KNEW FROM
AROUND. WE BECAME
BEST FRIENDS.

"ONE DAY SHE AND ANOTHER GIRL
WERE GOING TO THE MOVIES. I
SAW THEM, AND MADE LIKE I WAS
SAVING THEM A PLACE ON LINE.

BOOKS

"THAT DAY MONA LISA
INTRODUCED ME... TO
ANTOINETTE.

"WE HAD A LOT IN
COMMON. SHE AND
I. HER FATHER
WAS AN ALCOHOLIC,
TOO.

"IT WAS LOVE --
OR AT LEAST
CO-DEPENDENCY--
AT FIRST SIGHT."

SHE'D JUST BROKEN UP WITH A
MALE MODEL WHO *BEAT* HER,
AND BEFORE THAT, A DRUG DEALER
WHO THOUGHT SHE WASN'T
GLASSY ENOUGH
FOR HIM.

"AND THEN CAME THE NIGHT THAT MY
LIFE WENT INTO THE SEWER...

"...THE NIGHT I GOT MY *POWERS*
FROM GODKIN STRAITH...

"...THE NIGHT THAT ANTOINETTE *LEFT* ME.

SHE AND I HAD SHARED A
LOT OF THE SAME *PAIN*--I
THOUGHT I KNEW HOW TO
MAKE HER *HAPPY*.

"I LOVED HER. I THOUGHT
SHE LOVED *ME*. I DON'T
KNOW WHAT HAPPENED.
BUT I SURVIVED.

"THAT'S WHAT
I ALWAYS DO.
...*SURVIVE*."







AND I'M
GOING TO
FIND
HIM!

I DON'T KNOW
HOW MUCH TIME I
HAVE LEFT... IF I'VE
ANY TIME LEFT
AT ALL...

BUT
TRIP MUNROE'S
GOING INTO
YOUR BRAIN,
BLOODSHED!

I HOPE
YOU DON'T
MIND !!!

NEXT! THE FINAL CONFRONTATION!
THE ULTIMATE DECISION!

THE EVOLUTION OF TRIP MUNROE!

AN INTERVIEW WITH



WRITER FRANK LOVECE

Frank Lovece lives in New York City. A comic book writer/journalist, he earns his keep working words to their limit. It wasn't easy, but we managed to rip him from the keyboard long enough to do the following interview. An engaging writer, Frank is the kind of writer who hates talking about himself, but when push comes to shove, he is willing to talk your ear off. But when a man has something to say, we're always anxious to listen.

When did you start writing?

Lovece — My earliest memory of writing was at seven years old, it was drawing up pretend newspapers on paper towels. I would watch the news at night and use the TV news as information to make a pretend paper. Then, in seventh grade, I started a school newspaper. I did that for a while, but the first place I really made money from writing was when I was in high school. I wrote English papers for college students at five bucks a pop, (laughs) I got it, too.

Which is a good start for someone who went on to become a journalist.

Lovece — That's true. But it's important to me to make this clear: while I consider myself a good journalist, I've been a fiction writer ever since I was a kid, it's where my heart is. I got into journalism as a day job. For me, it's like being a waiter. I've written four books (*Thirty years of Television*, 1984, *Hailing a Taxi: the Critical Book of the Show*, *The Brady Bunch Book*, 1990, co-authored with Andy Edelstein, and *The Television Year Book*, 1992), as well as having a nationally syndicated newspaper column. But here's the way I see it, Harrison Ford always was a great carpenter, he would be the carpenter to the stars — but he didn't want to be a carpenter, it wasn't in his heart to be a carpenter. But he can still build a great table. That's what journalism is to me. I do it, I'm good at it, but my heart is in the fiction.

How'd you get into comics?

Lovece — It was 1983, Mike Okamoto and I got together to do some freelance comic book stories, just for practice, basically. Eventually, we felt confident enough to put together a series proposal, which was *ATOMIC AGE*. What we did was we took it around the different comic companies, and when we got to Epic, Carl Potts, showing enormous courage with two unknowns, championed it even when people were telling him, "This will never work." But to this day I'm still running into people with fond memories of *ATOMIC AGE*. It found a real cult audience. That was where the comics began. Then it went straight from *ATOMIC AGE*, to *HELLRAISER*, to *HOKUM & HEX*.

Didn't you recently do some work on NIGHTSTALKERS, the Midnight Sons' book?

Lovece — That's right, Chris Cooper called me up to wrap the series up. I did the last three issues. I liked doing that a lot, working with established Marvel characters I grew up reading, and be able — in consultation with Chris and Bobby Chase — (Midnight Sons' group editor) — to go back into Marvel continuity, and wrap up not only the *NIGHTSTALKERS* story, but loose ends from *TOMB OF DRACULA*. It was a fun, enchanting experience.

What was your first take on Trip Monroe, the lead character?

Lovece — One thing I've always been a fan of, and something I think I can write, with some ability, is characters with inner conflict — people who have very complex wants and desires which they don't always acknowledge out loud. Every stand-up comic whom I've interviewed or known — and they wouldn't often admit this — seem deep down to be miserable people.

Maybe miserable is too strong a word, but there has to be something, humor is so aggressive, there has to be some need to be aggressive to get out there and do comedy.

So the conflict here is simple: Trip is not an aggressive person. He's been battered by parents, both literally and figuratively, by the world around him, by women he's known, and yet he is compelled to try to make sense of his pain by making jokes about it. He has a very real need for a release from his pain, but at the same time he doesn't have the aggressiveness that he needs to be a really good stand-up comic.

There's a line in a Frank Gilroy film *The Gig*, a terrific little movie, about a bunch of amateur weekend jazz musicians — middle-aged guys who have been playing together for years and finally get a two week gig up in the Catskills. One of these weekend jazz guys gets sick so they have to get a professional in with them. At the end of the two week gig, of course, one of the weekend players wants to stay on and play with this professional. But the fact is, he's just not good enough. And this is the moment in the film that the professional, in one line, sums it all up: "Music," he says, "is not a religion." He's saying faith in yourself can take you a long way, but without talent to back it up — that's not going to work. And that's the tragic thing.

And in a roundabout way, that's what Trip is about. He's got decent talent. He's like a lot of guys I know, like a lot of guys everyone knows, and he wants to do something, he wants to have that sense of self worth, he wants to find himself, wants to be somebody, but he just doesn't have the talent.

But then Trip gets these powers. How does that change the picture?

Lovece — Right. Then he gets these powers. These powers are something he doesn't want, and in fact tries to actively get rid of. It's because he's so bad with them, he's hurting people. And yet, ironically, he has a natural talent for it. From the very first moment he gets these powers, not even knowing he has them, he's able to fight off the Corpii warriors. It's because we all have talents in things we don't know about, it's just a matter of finding out what these talents are.

HOKUM & HEX begins with Trip so confused by what is happening around him that he initially does nothing but react to it, which is not typical in a superhero character. That changes, but maybe you can talk a bit about why you designed the opening issues that way.

Lovece — This was always planned as a sort of mini-series within a larger series. There was a learning curve. I didn't want this to be the typical super hero thing where somebody gets his powers and immediately knows how to use them, and at the same time I didn't want it to be something goofy like *The Greatest American Hero* where every time he tries to fly and land he runs into brick walls. Neither one of these things struck me as what would happen if I or somebody I knew had powers like these.

Right off, it's going to be shock and disbelief, then you're going to rebel against these powers, try to get rid of them because they're just complicating your life, and then only after finding out that you can't lose these powers any more than you can lose your soul or your talents, then, and only then, you're going to come to accept them.

"From the very first moment [Trip] gets these powers, not even knowing he has them, he's able to fight off the Corpii warriors. It's because we all have talents in things we don't know about; it's just a matter of finding out what these talents are."

It's at the end of issue #9, after the end of the four-issue series-within-the-series, at the end of the Bloodshed arc. Trip, having figuratively gone to Hell and back, comes to realize that he has to — and wants to — accept these powers and learn how to use them to their fullest. He's grown and changed, and that was something I planned from the beginning.

As people reading this issue are just learning, the next issue of *HOKUM & HEX* is to be the last issue. What are your feelings towards the book's ending?

Lovece — If the series has to end for now, issue #9 is the most logical place for it to end. It's because it reaches a point where both Trip and Gorkill have each made a fundamental decision. Trip decides...

...Yikes! Don't spill that here!

Lovece — (smiles) You're right. Well, then, talking more broadly, I can only hope that the readers who have been following the book, if they like these characters, people will write in and say so. These are good characters, it would be a shame to lose them.

Thanks, Frank.

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